

An Apology for the Church of England against the Defamations of Deists, with an Address to the Dissenters.

A

694.e 9
14

SERMON

Preached at the
Primary Visitation

OF THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD

THOMAS

Lord Bishop of *Chichester*

In the Cathedral Church

June the 27th. 1710.

By William Whitear M. A. Prebendary
K of the said Cathedral.

Published at the Desire of the Lord Bishop and the Clergy.

L O N D O N,

Printed for S. Koble at the *Turk's-head* in *Fleetstreet*, 1710.

an apology for the Church of England against the
accusations of Deists, with an address to the Dissenters.

A
SERMON

Preached at the
Primæval Institution
OF THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD

THOMAS
Lord Bishop of Chichester

In the Cathedral Church

June the 27th. 1710.

By William Whiter M. A. Prebendary
of the said Cathedral.

Printed at the Desire of the Lord Bishop and the Chapter.

L O N D O N

Printed for S. Knap at the Turk's-head in Fleet-street 1710.

But as they had so favourable thoughts
of this, however mean Performance; and it is also
Honoured with Your Lordship's Approbation, and
Concurrence; that some things in it, may be useful
to the Christian Church; I submit and with
of our most excellent Church; I submit and with
all humility, I offer it to Your Lordship's
hoping it will be read with Candour and that the
Church will be accepted of him
My Lord, I beg
Blessed be to him

Right Reverend Father in GOD
THOMAS
Lord Bishop of Chichester

My Lord,

I Beg leave to offer the following Discourse to
the World, under the Protection of Your
Lordship's Patronage; which I was far
from designing should ever have reached
the Auditory in which it was delivered.
I was fully sensible of my own Inability, to
say any thing on this, or any other Subject, which
Your Lordship might not have heard with advan-
ce, and much stronger reasoning, from any of my
Bre-

Dedication?

Brethren. But as they had so favourable thoughts of this, however mean Performance; and it is also Honoured with Your Lordship's Approbation, and Concurrence; that some things in it, may be useful to the Cause of our Holy Religion, and the Service of our most excellent Church; I submit, and with all ~~low~~ Humility lay it before Your Lordship; hoping it will be read with Candor and that sincere Charity with which I composed it. I humbly beg Your Lordship's Paternal Benediction, and to be accepted.

My Lord,

Beg leave to offer the following Discourse to
the World, under the Protection of Your
Lordship's Patronage; which I was far
from thinking ever have reached
the Auditory in which it was delivered.
I am fully sensible of my own inability to
do any thing on this, or any other Subject, which
Your Lordship might not have heard with advan-
tage and much greater reasoning, from any of my
Bre-

Son and Servant
William White

1 COR. IV. 13. Βλασφημώμενοι, ὡς ἀρχαῖοι. —

Being defamed, we intreat. —

THIS is part of the Account St. Paul gives of the Usage which himself and the other Apostles receiv'd, and the returns they made; which he sets forth in this Epistolary Debate with those of the *Corinthians*, who had joyned in the Schism, fomented, and carried on by the *Gnosticks*; and in which he takes the freedom of an Irony, to upbraid their conceited ease and tranquility, by a politick compliance, to avoid Persecution. *Now ye are full, (v. 8.) now ye are rich; ye have reigned as Kings without us; You fancy your selves in a greater state of security than the Apostles from whom you receiv'd the Christian Faith; and I wish it were such a true Christian peace of mind, as you pretend to. But (v. 10.) We are such Fools, as to persist in our duty of vindicating those Truths which Christianity teaches, whilst you look on your Religion, as consistent with the Wisdom of blending its Doctrines, with a complication of Errors, and not to be too stiff and tenacious. We are weak, and indiscreet, thus to expose our selves, whilst you are strong, in your well secured Interests; so that you are honoured and caress'd, but we are despised, as mean and contemptible Persons. For (v. 9.) I think that God has set forth us, the Apostles last, as it were Men appointed to Death; for we are made a Spectacle to the World, and to Angels, and to Men.* Like those mentioned *Heb. 10. θιατερίζομεν*, which is the same with *θέατρον ἐξουθενώμεν* here, as Men exposed on Theaters or Stages, condemned with the Gladiators, or as others to the Fire, or the Teeth of wild Beasts. But under all these Sufferings, *being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it, without any thoughts of Revenge; and then, in the reverse of our Text, being defamed, we intreat; we are made, or esteem'd and dealt with, as the filth of the World, the reproach of Mankind; and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day, as the Dross, or Scum, the recrements of Mettals; or as the squalid, sordid expiatory lustrations of infected Cities; for without our destruction they think the World would labour under continual Plagues. And under this load of all kinds of Defamation, we only return, that we cannot give up our Integrity, nor any of those Truths of our Religion we are commanded to teach; but we lay the reasons of it before them, and intreat their considering them, and we pray to God for them.*

B. The

The Words of our Text, which are but two, have nothing critical, or curious in them ; but are a very plain account, as we have seen, of what Reception the Preachers of the Gospel found, and how they behaved themselves under it.

To be defamed, is to have our good Name, and Reputation blasted to be evil spoken of, *βλασφημίζοις*, the being reviled, despised, and falsely accused ; having things laid to our charge, that we know not, loaded with Crimes and Wickedness we abhor.

To intreat, is to make the mildest returns, *παρηκαλῶμεν*, we beseech and perswade ; *Obsecramus, & precamur*, we pray to God for them, and desire them to treat us with more fairness and justice ; to look into the nature and tendency of those Opinions, and Actions, for which they defame us ; which we are assured will incline them to think better of us. Thus, *Being defamed, we intreat.*

And as this of the Apostles is a Case in which all Ages of the Church are, or may be concerned, so it gives us these two Remarks.

First, that it is no sufficient ground of Prejudice against a Religion, or particular Church, to be loaded with Defamation. Scoffs, and Derision are no Arguments.

Secondly, that the true Religion is open and fair, to offer its Reasons for its own Apology, and its Adversaries Conviction ; addressing it self to them with plainness and sincerity.

If the first of these were not true, Christianity were the most infamous, and intollerable Religion the World ever receiv'd ; for sure none was ever so much loaded with Reproaches ; none ever so much exposed its Author, and Professors as this did. Our Blessed Saviour's Meekness, Humility, inoffensive Life, and sweetness of Temper ; all the good he could do, and all the Miracles he could work, could not protect him from the most wretched Defamations of being a Glutton, and a Drunkard, an Impostor, a Conjuror, a Blasphemer of God, and a Traytor to *Cæsar*. And thus did his Religion afterwards meet with the utmost Perverseness, and obstinate Infidelity ; being an invincible Scandal to the Jews, who pretended to be the only Judges of Revelation ; and a very despicable Foolishness to the Gentile World, who examined all things by the Wisdom of their Philosophy.

The account we have seen from our Apostle in this short view of very few Verses, has given us a sufficient Specimen of it. And this was more than their Lord and Master had made them expect. *If they call the Master of the House Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his Household ? Behold, I send you forth as Sheep, in the midst of Wolves ; among Men that will deliver you up to their Councils, and bring you before Governors*

And Kings for my sake; and for my sake ye shall be hated of all Men. And this with such a bigotted Zeal, that whosoever killed you will think that he does God Service. A dismal Prospect of Religion! and a strange Invitation to it. And however the World loaded him with Calumnies, and put him to Death as an Impostor, and a Deceiver of the People; yet they afterwards took the most effectual Care to prove him a true Prophet; they let none of these Sayings fall to the Ground; they soon shewed the Apostles, that the Disciple was not above his Master, nor the Servants above his Lord; but they would give them the Satisfaction of being as much like him as they could, in their usage of them.

Sometimes they were accused as Persons dangerous to the Government; as pestilent Fellows, Ring-leaders of a mischievous Sect, movers of Sedition; Men that turned the World up-side-down. Sometimes again, they were slighted, and despised. What will this Babbler say? The merry Epicureans, and the morose Stoicks, both joyn in the Conclusion, that St. Paul was an idle Fellow, one who had pick'd up some foolish Stories, and came to fill the Peoples Ears with the news of some strange Gods, when he preached to them Jesus, and the Resurrection.

Thus again, was he slighted by the Governour of *Cæsarea*; Here is a certain Man in Prison, says *Festus* to King *Agrippa*, whom the Jews have loaded with heavy charges; but when I look't into it, I found nothing in it, but there had been an impertinent Squabble among them, about their own Superstition, and one *Jesus*, who was dead whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

Thus every thing raised their malice, and their clamour, and whether the charge were of great moment, or of none at all, it always ended in noise, and tumult, away with such a Fellow from the Earth; it is not fit that he should live.

Thus instance of St. Paul's usage (of whom the most History we have in the Scriptures, of the Apostles Travels, and Actions, speaks more than of all the rest) may let us judge of the Reception, and Entertainment of the whole Mission; and is sufficient evidence of the Observation, that there are Men bad enough in the World, to oppose the best Religion, though supported with all the evidence that truth can require; and address'd with all due strength of Argument and mildness of Temper; and therefore it can be no reasonable ground of prejudice against any Religion, or particular Church, or its Members, to be loaded with Defamations.

For here the other remark was not wanting, that the true religion is

St. John 16. 2.
Acts 23. 14. 19.

St. Matth. 10. 24.
C. 22. v. 22.

Acts 24. 5. 6. 17. v. 6. v. 18.

open and fair, to offer its reasons for the Satisfaction, and Conviction of its Adversaries. The Passage of our Text gives us an assurance of *St. Paul's* thus carrying himself under all his ill Treatment. And in another place he tells us how careful he was to give no offence in any thing, that, on his account, the Ministry it self, the Apostolick Office, and the Religion it taught, might not be blamed, or evil spoken of. But in all things, says he, we approve our selves with Fidelity, as the Ministers of God, in much patience, attending its success, in Affliction, in Necessities, in Distresses, in Stripes, in Imprisonments, in Tumults, &c. But still, by pureness of Life, and Doctrine, by Knowledge, declaring to them all the council of God; concealing no necessary Duty, nor waving any Doctrine in compliance with any growing Heresies; by Long-suffering, by Kindness towards all, and giving them demonstrations of the power of the Holy Ghost in us, and by the sincerest love, and charity to them. And thus we pass through evil report of some, as not well known, and therefore taken for Deceivers, but have the good report of others, as well known by them, to be true and faithful Dispensers of the Gospel of Christ. And thus, though we are chastened, we are not yet killed; though in a very sorrowful condition, in the opinion of Men, yet inwardly rejoicing, in the comforts of our own Integrity, and at the success of our Preaching, and Deportment, notwithstanding so much opposition.

Inoffensive carriage, and assiduous application will prevail on tempers not wholly given up to obstinate aversion. And we see the effects of our Apostles discourse in the instance of his pleading before *Festus*, and *Agrippa*; the strength of his reasoning with *Truth* and *Soberness*, and the sweetness of his address, even in what the Governor slighted, as an impertinent trifle, when yet seriously debated, had almost persuaded King *Agrippa* to be a Christian.

And the success of his, and the other Apostles preaching we find to be like what the Pharisees observed of our Saviour; all their methods of Defamation to run down this Religion, and strangle it in its birth, prevailed nothing, but the World went after them. For, as *Gamaliel* advised, all their opposition was fighting against God.

I have thus far considered the case of the Infant Christian Church, as it truly answer'd the Account of our Text; because its example becomes our Duty, in all Meekness of Behaviour, but an immoveable steadfastness in the Cause of our Religion, and a becoming Zeal for the Truth, when Defamed, or Oppress'd.

This Rule was also transcribed into the Practice of the next purest Ages of the Church, and had a suitable Success. For if we trace this matter downwards, we find the Primitive Christians surrounded with

An Apology for the Church of England.

Enemies of every kind; the civil Powers every where in combination against them; continually attack'd by the Disputers of this World; and not the least of their troubles arising from the Corruptions, and Obstinacy of Schisms and Heresies. In all which, I say, they observ'd the Rule of our Text; they *intreated* when *defamed*; their Arguments were strong, and their Addresses mild.

As to the civil Powers, it was the constant Matter of their frequent Apologies, that their Religion was calculated for another World, and did forbid their disturbing, or opposing them, on the severest Penalties, even that of Damnation. Nor did they only bear witness to themselves, but the Roman Emperours had all possible Assurance of their peaceable, and submissive Deportment, from the Governours of those Provinces where they lived. So that there was no Fear of the Thrones being invaded, nor its Peace disturbed, where constant Prayers were offer'd up for the Emperour, for the Success of his Arms, the good Conduct of his Councils, the flourishing of the Empire, and his long Life.

But they vindicated their Faith against all Opposers, even in the abstrusest Articles of it; that it was not loaded with Contradictions, or Absurdities; for as they piously believed some mysterious Truths, so they shew'd the demonstrative Evidences of them, from the certainty of their being reveal'd by God, and attested by undeniable Miracles.

And as they vindicated their own Religion by such Principles and Arguments, as bespoke its Author to be a Just, and Wise, and Holy God; so did they expose the falsity of Heathenism from the same Topicks of absurdity and contradiction in their Principles; the mighty Folly of their Idol Worship; the immodesty and wickedness of their Religious rites; and the shortness of Rewards and Punishments assigned by them, to encourage Virtue, or to awe Mankind from the most loose and vicious Lives.

Nor were they less diligent in suppressing Schisms and Heresies; in which indeed, they appear'd with Zeal, and Authority, in their Censures and Determinations. For thus they understood the Practice of the Apostles; that whilst they used all becoming Methods of Mildness and Charity, they never gave up that needful Authority with which Christ invested them; and could address themselves in the *Spirit of meekness*, or come with the *Rod of Discipline*, even to the *delivering over* Satan, as the Case required.

Thus they kept to the Apostolical Rule and Practice, and bore all the calumnies with which they were loaded, with no other Returns, than what the Honour and Vindication of our holy Religion required, which they dared not betray. And in this they have left us *Precedents*, when the Case shall be our own.

And

And I wish I could say we were so happy, as to have no pretence to the *Βαρβαρισμὸς* of our Text; or that we were not so defamed, as, by an easy Figure, to read it *εὐαγγελισμὸς*. We are not indeed appointed unto Death; but we are made a Spectacle to the World, by envenom'd Satyr. we have not the Apostles Scourgings, but we have their cruel Mockings; we are not condemned to the Fire, nor thrown to wild Beasts, with the Primitive Christians, but our Soul is among Lions, and the Sons of Men are set on fire against us; their Teeth are Spears and Arrows, and they shoot our bitter Words; their Tongue is a sharp Sword, they have sharpen'd it like a Serpent, and (to finish the Metaphor) Adder's Poison is under their Lips.

Nor will this appear an Excursion, but the necessary Application of the Case of our Text, to any that shall reflect, with what indecent Scorn our Religion is treated, in Swarms of Libels, and blasphemous Derisions; with what daring Efforts of spurious Wit they spurn against all the most gracious Methods, which the Wisdom and Goodness of Almighty God has contrived for our Salvation. For what are we through whose Sides the Wounds are given? Is it not the Cause of God we plead? Whose Religion they despise; whose Altars they throw down; whose Sacraments they vilify; tread the Blood of his Son under Foot; as a despicable thing of neither Merit nor Value? And reject his whole Revelation, accusing him of want of Wisdom or Integrity, of Partiality and Tyranny, in depriving Men of their natural Right; and confine them to his own Scheme of Religion, as if Man did not know what was fit for God to receive? Are not these so many Darts thrown against Heaven? And how do they glory in their present Impunity! Like the bold Fellow which took the Golden Scepter out of Jupiter's Hand, and mock'd him with a wooden Pageantry in its stead; and derided the Impotence of the artificial God, that could neither hold fast his Ensign of Power, nor revenge the Affront. But our God is not a God of Wood or Stone, to be for ever ridiculed.

What would the meekest of the Apostles have return'd to such Scoffers, of whom they could not even foretell without a warm Resentment. They bely their own Convictions, says St. Peter, their pretended Ignorance is but a Guize put on; they are willingly ignorant; that is, they wou'd be so if they could; tho' they know that God has very fully reveal'd himself; and has instituted a Religion, which they have no mind to believe, because they have no mind to practise it; and therefore they stretch their Wits to find out Arguments against it. This they know, as much as they can know any thing which was before themselves; and

they know too, says the Apostle, that God has already vindicated his Honour, and avenged himself on such bold sacrilegious Invaders of his own Institutions, by a Judgment worthy of himself; and yet they are resolv'd to venture that terrible everlasting Perdition, to which he reserves such ungodly Men.

That this is the Case; that the Christian Religion in general is thus defamed, as well as our Church in particular vilified, were heartily to be wish'd were known to few. But when such blasphemous Scoffs are industriously spread, and the Infection so taking, that to affront Religion becomes a Mark of Wit, and Parts, and Education; when it is accounted a Gentleman's Privilege to have very little to do with Religion, or Religion with him; and he is willing to sink down softly into Ruin; it then becomes every charitable Hand to administer what Antidote it is able to reach; to lend its Assistance in endeavoring to save the unhappy Man; to use the Method of our Text, to intreat he will consider the deplorable Estate he is falling into.

'Tis not within the Compass of a Discourse of this nature, to take the whole Design to pieces, and discover all its Weaknesses, and expose its deceitful outside Appearance; and I am sensible of my own Inequality to the Work. But as the Blessing of God goes with every good Intention, some general Intimations and Precautions may be useful to shew the Rock and the Gulf; to lay open, in some measure, the Tendency and mischievous Consequence of the least favouring such Principles.

I would then begin my Entreaty, by desiring their entertaining some serious Reflections on the Great and Adorable Majesty of Almighty God; their own continual Dependance on Him; what Service and Homage is due to the Creator from all his Creatures; how worthy He is of the greatest Honour, and Obedience we can pay Him; and the venerable Nature of the Religion which addresses them, that they would not think the Business of Life to be altogether Comedy; all its Scenes made up of Jest, and Laughter, and Folly; or that Religion is the worse, if it does not delight in Railery and Banter. For indeed it is above all there is nothing ridiculous or trifling in it; and therefore it can more be reconciled to witty Prophaneness, and indecent Jest, than themselves would be to the Affronts of their Servants, or the Derisions of their Children. It is no hard Matter for Men to laugh at what they cannot answer; and at the plainest Demonstrations, as well as at the most impertinent Harangue; but it betrays a mighty want of Judgment, not to distinguish. It is this which makes the Word of God Himself little free from the prophan Attempts, and scurrilous Lashes of such malicious Tempers, as the vilest Romance. But that these venerable

Re-

Records of our Religion may obtain a serious hearing, when they plead their Divine Authority, and Original.

Let it be first considered of what use it can be, or what ends it can serve, to cry down the Certainty of a reveal'd Religion, and resolve all into the Dictates of unassisted Nature? Whether Men are likely to choose better for themselves, than God has chose for them? Or can better tell him what Service is due to him, than he can tell them, what he will accept? Or whether it be more desirable to be left to our selves, without any Knowledge on what Terms God will pardon our Sins, and bestow Heaven on us; than that he should declare his Will in this Matter, and enter into Covenant, and give us infallible assurance, that on our performing our Part of it, he will receive us into everlasting Happiness? Yet this the Difference between a reveal'd and natural Religion.

Let us again consider this in Experiment. In the first Ages of the World, God gave no written Law to Mankind, but, as the Apostle expresses it, what was *written in their hearts*; and this was the Law of Nature, and Men then worship'd God by natural Religion. And when before the Flood, they lived seven, or eight, or nine hundred Years, they had an Advantage above these latter Ages, to instruct Posterity, and prevent their running into a false Religion; and yet we see, that in Sixteen Hundred Years, which Three Generations of Men saw, the World was so over-run with Wickedness, and the true Religion so utterly lost, that God destroyed them all but one Family. And then he put them on a new Trial, as the World increas'd, and they again so far run on in the old Ignorance and Error, that when God was pleased to give a written Religion to but one Nation, that of the *Jews*; what a great and wise, and understanding People did it make them, in comparison of all the World besides? And if we consider the last, and most compleat Revelation by our Blessed Saviour; we see how short, and mean even the *Jewish* Religion was in comparison of it; and how little all the Philosophy of *Athens* was able to withstand the Power of Christianity.

And if our haranguing Advocates for natural Religion, shall pretend to want only sufficient evidence for the Divine Authority of what we offer the World for such; we still intreat them to consider

First, that suppose its Divine Revelation were uncertain, yet it is very plain, that it is so much better than what any People in the World besides ever had, that we cannot exchange but for the worse; which would be a Disservice to the World, and therefore not to be complied with.

And if our Religion were of Mens Invention, why have no other Peo

ple invented so good? Why did not the Philosophers at Athens produce another System as good as Christianity? They were the wisest, and most learned Men of their own Age, and could urge their Arguments with as much Smartness as any Deist of ours. They were Men of great Strength of Reason, and Sharpness of Wit; exquisite Philosophers, and celebrated Improvers of natural Knowledge; and yet saw themselves vastly exceeded in the Matter of Religion, by poor illiterate Fishermen, and their Companions, who were the first Preachers of the Gospel. Nay they sunk so very low, that, as God upbraids all such by his Prophet, they thought they could work a Stock or a Stone into a God. And when the Height of their Researches carried them to acknowledge one supreme Being, their Altars was inscribed *to the unknown God*; and they knew not how to address him for want of Revelation. And whilst they measured the Excellence of their Religion by their worshipping more Gods than other Nations did, it only more exposed the Blindness of their Superstition, and the Ignorance of their Worship. So darkly, and unsuccessfully did they feel after God, if haply they might find him, without Revelation. And why do not our Despisers of a revealed Religion, draw us a better Scheme, or acknowledge what we have to be from God? What more exalted Virtues have they taught the World; or been eminent for the Practice of themselves? What better Security of Justice and Honesty, and the due preserving every Man's Rights?

However, Secondly, we are not left to put the matter on these Issues; for we have all the Proof, and certainty of Divine Revelation to direct us; and of our own Religion being thus establish'd, that the nature of it can require, or admit of. As the Mosaick, and Christian Dispensations were each of them attested with undenyable Miracles; so the comparing one with the other does highly demonstrate the Divine Authority of both. For it was not possible that Men who lived at many hundred of years distance from each other, should so impose on the World by compact, that the former should foretel what the latter should do; and yet this is the case of the two parts of our Bible; whatever was foretold in the Old Testament, was fulfilled in the New; which none but God could promise should come to pass; or if any Man had pretended to it, without such Authority; yet neither himself, nor all the Powers of any after Age; none but God himself could make it good. Thus we have all possible Assurance of the Truth of the Holy Scriptures, as they are conveyed down to us; they being the same we find quoted in every Age and Country, where Christianity has been profess'd, since the times they were written.

It is then very plain that the Rejectors of Revelation can serve neither private nor publick Interest; but would rob us of all the Certainty we have of any Means of our Salvation, and let the World loose into the greatest Licentiousness. For if the World be so bad under all the directions of God himself, and the most powerful Incentives to Piety and Virtue; what would it be, if left under the delusions of Fancy, and Passion? For to that would the Law of Nature amount in the Pleas of Mankind, when every one must contrive a Religion for himself; and the Event must needs be like that of *Israel*, when every Man did that which was right in his own Eyes. But

Another Instance of Defamation against us in the Profession of our Religion is, that we cover our selves under the Darknes of unintelligible Mysteries, and so they would strip Christianity of its Glory, in the wonderful Method of our Redemption. To this end all the Evidences of it are decryed, and the Cheats of Heathen Oracles are brought up to an Equality with the Miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles. Thus the vilest Practises, and Conjurations of *Apollonius Tyanicus* were of old set up, as a greater Evidence of Miracles, than our Blessed Saviours; and *Hierocles* boasted that *Maximus Aegienis*, and *Damis* the Philosopher were more credible Witnesses, and competent Judges, than *St. Peter*, and *St. Paul*, poor illiterate Men. An old Artifice used against *Moses* and *Aaron* by the Prince of Darknes, in the Magicians of *Egypt* vying Miracles with them. But it is very disingenuous to turn the same Instances on us again, as if our Saviour's Hypostatick Union was still to be confuted by *Apollonius's* Tricks; who, they say, was only honour'd as a Man dear to the Gods but that his Followers did not with the levity of Christians, ever pay Divine Worship to him. This, I say, is an Objection too disingenuous to revive; for they cannot but know that the Imposture has been discovered and all the Pretences of it baffled above Fourteen Hundred Years since.

But let us reason it a little with these Opposers of Mysteries in our Religion. They do not think it reasonable to believe what they cannot comprehend. And to this we say

First, that we contend for nothing that is unreasonable to be believed nor do we pretend to explain Mysteries; but we must submit our Faith to what God has revealed in the holy Scriptures; this is very reasonable and our Duty. And being there, in general assured, that without Contrivance great is the Mystery of Godliness; we must understand it of such particulars as will continue Mysteries to us, till God shall exalt and refine our Natures, to see him as he is; since *St. Paul* does there instance in the two Natures of Christ, which is the *Manifestation of God in the Flesh*; and

by these Mens Confession, must remain a Mystery to the Worlds end; for they own, and make it their Objection, that it is Incomprehensible.

And since we are well assured of the truth of this Mystery from many other Evidences; to deny it for that Reason, that it is a Mystery, is to disbelieve God, who has given us so plain Attestations of it. It is to limit his Power and Understanding, and to make them equal with our own; as if He which gave us all the Faculties of our Souls, and has made so many degrees of Excellency in the several Ranks and Orders of his Creation; and has made such difference in the Understandings of particular Men, could raise us no higher, and has reserv'd no degrees of Knowledge, and Wisdom to Himself, uncommunicated to us: And yet, if we allow, He has infinite Reserves, (or He cannot, indeed, be an Infinite Being;) it is undeniable, that He may reveal the certainty of many things to us, the manner of which we cannot comprehend; and then its incomprehensibility ought to be no Reason for our disbelieving it.

The Angelical Nature is superior to ours, and comprehends many things which are beyond our capacity in the State we are; and we hope, and expect that our selves shall have unconceivable degrees of Perfection added, when our Bodies too shall be spiritualized, and shall know many things of which here we are ignorant. St. Paul in his transport had inexpressible things discover'd to him; and cannot God, if he pleases, reveal some of these things to us also? must nothing be true beyond our present comprehension?

Even in things of this life, we allow of Secrets, and Mysteries in several Arts. And if it be replied, that these may be explained to our apprehensions, and then they will be no longer Mysteries; it is very plain that God can also lay the greatest Mysteries open; and we must humbly submit, and wait his time, when he shall raise our Natures to a capacity of it; and be content at present to see these things, as through a glass, darkly; to know no more, and believe as much as he is pleased to reveal.

Secondly, Whilst these Men pretend not to believe what they cannot comprehend, they confute themselves, in believing a Thousand things, of which they do not understand one. They believe, and are assured of their own composition of Soul and Body, and yet cannot understand the Nature of either. They believe there must be an eternal duration, and yet cannot comprehend it. They are convinc'd of the Power of Chymistry, by which, in common speaking, incredible things are perform'd; and whilst they dispute the truth of God's raising the same Body which dies, because they cannot comprehend the possibility of re-uniting the scatter'd, and transform'd Particles; yet they allow the many Transmu-

tations of * *Mercury* into diverse Powders and Liquors of various Colours and Powers, and at last to be reducible to its first natural Form. And cannot God by his own ways, past our finding out, reduce the dispers'd matter of humane Bodies, even after their undergoing many alterative digestions? They own the Magnetick Power to collect the filings of Iron, and separate them from all other Sands, and Dust, with which they are intermixt; and is not God infinitely more powerful to call together the farthest distant Particles of matter which compose our Bodies? If Nature can produce such wonderful Effects, how much greater must the Author of Nature be! what limits shall we set to his Power, who made all things out of nothing? Nay, some things in Mathematicks are demonstrably true, which are not to be explained, but remain incomprehensible. And what are these but so many curious and useful Mysteries in Nature? And why must God be believ'd, when he reveals some of infinite value, and consequence to us? For

Thirdly, How will these wise Men contrive the doing that without a Mystery, which God has seen fit to accomplish by several? How could they contrive to save the World without one, and satisfy the offended Justice of God? since our Sins are not to be considered as meer Debts, to be forgiven without satisfaction; nor God Himself as acting by his absolute Dominion; but under the Dispensation of Laws of Government, by which his Eternal Truth and Justice require adequate satisfaction for the demerits of Sin? And to dispute the necessity of this way of Redemption, and pretend to determine what God might have done by his Right of Dominion, antecedent to establish'd Laws, is wholly to change the State of the Case; and is too near the arraigning his Wisdom in it; which if we allow to have designed the best for us, it is ungrateful to God, as well as fatal to our selves, to deny the only method, which his Goodness has made use of for the Redemption of the World.

And therefore we still pursue the Directions of our Text, by the Apostle's example, and *intreat* them to consider the infinite disadvantage they bring on themselves, by throwing off, and renouncing the only Propitiation which could be made for their Sins; and that, without any Supply for what they reject, or an equivalent redress.

And however this be taken, yet we hope our Intreaty to others will prevail, in the Address of a late Learned † Bishop of our Church, in his Apology for the Mysteries of the Gospel. "That they would not yield to be seduced by those, who have never been able with all their Wit, and Reason, to explicate, or comprehend the Mysteries, or Me-

* See Dr. *Scot's* Christian Life, Part 2. Vol. 2. pag. 502.

† Bishop *Ward's* Sermon on *Rom.* 1. 16.

"chanies of a Mite, or a Flea; of a Plant, or a Stone; and yet, by
"Grammaticizing pedantically, and Criticizing spuriously upon a few
"Greek Particles, or Words, would cozen the World of the Benefit of
"the Blood of Christ, and Christ himself of his Divinity; and put him
"off with a Poetical and Fantastical Apotheosis.

And indeed these ingenious Gentlemen have told us, how highly
they prize our common Christianity, when they address'd the *Morocco*
Ambassador, and prefer'd *Mahometism* to the Religion we profess.

We can have no design in proposing Mysteries to Men's belief, but
to instruct them in the Truths of Christianity; which is an equal Obliga-
tion on our selves and them. We have no private Recesses, and dark
Arcana, like the Heathen Priests, to amuse and deceive them; nor any
Devotions which depend on Men's Ignorance, as in the Church of
Rome; but, with another Learned Prelate of our Church, "wish that
"all our Laity understood as much of our Religion, as the most Learn-
"ed of our Clergy; we get as little by our People's Ignorance, as
"they can by ours. And we only lament the remissness of the genera-
"lity, that they do not sufficiently inform themselves. We would have
"them know as much as they can; only we would have them believe
"that both they and we may know much more than we do. We would
"not have the Blind presume to teach others to see; we would not
"have Men think they see when they do not; which is the most cer-
"tain way for them never to see at all. For Religion, like Philosophy,
improves the studious and diligent Inquirers; but a superficial smattering
in either, is the truest cause of Men's conceited Ignorance, and of their
stupid neglect of its wisest Instructions.

But after this treatment from the Men of Liberty, it must not be sur-
prising if the Charge be still improved, and we are farther defamed for
usurping the Authority of a stated Ministry; as if Christ had appointed
none in his Church; For thus we are told with an Air of assurance, that
Christ could not confine if immutably to a particular set of Men, without gross
partiality; and that it is inconsistent with the Wisdom, and Goodness of God,
to deprive Mankind of their natural liberty, to act according to their discretion in
all things which are only means of Salvation; that it would prove him an
enemy to the Christian Church; and enslave the World to a set of Ecclesiastics;
which would occasion a train of Mischiefs, the necessary consequence of a Di-
vine unalterable Power derived to them. And that this is setting up a Distinct
Power, Independent on the Civil State, which is inconsistent, and impossible in
any Government.

See Preface to the sixth part of Mr. Leslie's Socinian Controversy.

Dr. Sprat at a Sermon at Court.

Rights of the Church, p. 163. p. 142. p. 143. p. 33, &c.

Here

Here is a *Train of Mischiefs*, indeed, charged on our claim of divine Authority, which carry a cautionary terror in them, like Crosses set on infected Houses, for Mankind to avoid, as they would the Pestilence. It is very true, that our Claim is no less; and yet, if we may intreat a very little Consideration, we shall find nothing formidable in it; but that it is very inoffensive; nay, very beneficial; nay, indispensably necessary to the being of the Christian Church, on the Grounds of its first Institution. For the gathering any Number together in the Name of Christ, must be gathering them according to his Appointment, and by such Authority as he has established; or it is no more the doing it in his Name, than the sounding a Trumpet, and raising a Troop, or Regiment, would be doing it in the Name of the Queen, without her Commission. It may be a Rout, a Riot, or a Rebellion; but no lawful Force: And thus the Church of Christ, which is a regular Society, strengthened with Authority, and Government by its Charter, has always given other Names to Congregations without a lawful Ministry, than to its own duly constituted Worship.

And, what if Christ has appointed a Ministry, and has perpetuated its Succession to the end of the World? (which is certainly the truth,) Who then shall take upon him, to destroy that Institution, or set up another? And what if this Succession has been hitherto visible, and own'd in all Parts of the Christian World, and in all sorts of Government, without any of these mischievous affrightful Consequences, with which it is thus unmercifully loaded? (as it is also clear matter of Fact;) What must we call this spiteful harangue? Is it not *Zeno's* Argument against local Motion, which every Step confutes? For there is nothing more plain in every part of History, relating to the Ecclesiastical State, than this unalterable Priesthood in the Church, by a constant Succession, for more than Sixteen Hundred Years; and we doubt not of its so firm continuing to the end of the World, as Christ has promised, that the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against it.

Or must we not rather conclude such bold Imputations, as the loading Divine Institutions with heaps of Infamy, to be the charging God very foolishly, with want of Wisdom to govern the World himself has made? Did the *Jews* thus complain of the intolerable Mischiefs of a stated Priesthood? And yet was not theirs so unalterably confined to one Family and Tribe, that the Earth opened, and swallowed up the Opposers of it? Was it not part of *Jereboam's* Sin, that he set up a new Priesthood? And was not *Uzziah*, though a King, struck from Heaven with Leprosy in the very Act of intruding the Priests Office? And did God

forfeit his Attributes of all good, and all wise, by such Resentments? And this being the Case of the Jewish Church, and Priesthood; can we imagine the Church of Christ, which was to be a more perfect, and the last Dispensation, should yet be left in a more uncertain condition; exposed to continual, and endless Schisms? And the whole Constitution of it arbitrary, and precarious to the last Degree?

Nor is there more weight in that other Alarm to Kings, and People, that such Independent Power is inconsistent with the Security of the civil State, and involving the People in *inextricable difficulties*, being under *two clashing interfering Powers*. For we have the same demonstrative Answer to this; that the Experience of the World for so many Ages, is his eternal Confutation. Every Man has had the free Command of his domestick Affairs, without giving Umbrage to Church or State.

When our Blessed Saviour establish'd his Church, he took no notice of the Civil Powers, because his Kingdom did not in the least interfere with theirs, nor effect their Polity; and he had on other occasions sufficiently declared the Obligations of all Mankind, to give whatever was due to Temporal Princes. But that the Church was to have a Power independent on them, may appear on these accounts.

First, That the Nature and Tendency of it, is wholly distinct. Its Rites and Ordinances, its Laws and Censures, its Motives to Obedience in Rewards, and Punishments, do all respect the inner Man, and the eternal Interests of another Life; its strictest Precepts of moral Virtues, and Obligations to a conscientious Obedience, are all enjoyned on the same Motives. These, indeed, do so much affect the Civil Governments of the World, that they mightily conduce to the Peace, and Happiness of Prince and People; but this we hope will never be charged as an Inconsistence, though the different manner of its obliging us, shews its Power distinct.

Secondly, the Commission of its Officers, and the Nature of the Ministry are also wholly distinct from those of the Civil Powers; they neither receive their Authority from them; nor are their ministerial Ordinances of their Appointment; but both are the Establishment of Christ himself. The greatest Potentate on Earth cannot make a Bishop, or a Priest; nor perform the Divine ministerial Offices of the Church, nor inflict its Censures.

Thirdly, the Communion of the Church is universal, not confined to any Kingdom, nor to any Form of Civil Government; whether Monarchy, Aristocracy, or down to a popular Commonwealth; but the Catholick Church was always the same over all the World. And therefore when the Apostles separated themselves into the most distant Parts, and Kingdoms, of several Politics, they planted the same Religion, and the

the same Church Government in every Country. the Determinations, and Decrees of its general Councils oblige all Parts of the Catholick Church; and all National and Provincial Synods are to conform to them. Its Censures are so binding in all Parts of the Church, that Excommunication from one Part of it, is so from the whole. And the Apostolick Canons do therefore enjoin the rejecting the excommunicate Person from all Communion in other Churches, till it be certified that he is reconciled, and absolv'd in his own. So that this Extent of the Church's Power reaching beyond the bounds of any Particular Kingdom, or Empire, must be acknowledged to be distinct from it. And

Fourthly, its Subsistence, and Fulness of exercising the same Authority for three Hundred Years, before any civil Powers became Christian, and even under all Oppositions, and Persecutions from them, demonstrates an entire Independency on them, with relation to what was purely spiritual; which was all the Power it ever claimed.

And those who think the Case is alter'd in Christian Kingdoms; and therefore argue against the Independent Power of the Church, from its Incorporation into the civil State; may be pleased only to change the Expression, and say that the Civil State is within the Church; and yet both remain distinct in their Nature; (for all the Christian Kingdoms in the World are within the Catholick Church, which is but one;) and this would take off some difficulties in apprehending the consistence of two distinct Powers; leaving the Church in the full Possession of whatever Authority it received from Christ; without the least Invasion on the Civil Powers of the Earth. And we are assisted in this, by that Prophetick Description of the Kingdom of the Messiah, that *all Nations shall flow into it* (Isa. 2. 2.) *all Kings shall fall down before him, and serve him* (Ps. 72. 11.) *and worship him*. (Ps. 86. 9.) And the Protection which it receives from Civil Powers, in its free Profession, and open exercise of its Authority, is also conformable to that other part of God's Providential care of it; that *Kings should be her Nursing Fathers, and Queens her Nursing Mothers*. (Isa. 49. 23.) And all the Instances of the Civil Powers Directions and Injunctions, relating to any part of the Church's Power, or Discipline, are but so many Branches and Exertions of that Protection, Trust, and Patronage committed to them by God. Whence it is that our Church in her 37th Article says, that when we ascribe to our Kings or Queens, the chief Government of all Estates, and Causes, as well Ecclesiastical, as Civil; we give them only that Prerogative, which has been always given to Godly Princes in Holy Scriptures.

And therefore after Christianity was the profess'd and establish'd Religion

tion of Kingdoms, the Emperors were so far from thinking this to interfere with, or to be part of their own Supreme Authority, that they did not pretend to make Ecclesiastical Canons themselves, nor to have the Right of Excommunication. *Theodosius* therefore says of the Ecclesiastical Canons, * *Dei res, ipsi leges, arbitri ubi regerent*, they give them the force of Laws, to make them have the greater influence on the ob-
stinate. And *Justinian* thus Prefaces that † Novel. *Maxima quidem in hominibus sunt dona Dei, a superna collata clementia, Sacerdotium, & Imperium. Et illud quidem divinis ministrans, hoc autem humanis presidens, ac diligentiam exhibens. Ex uno, eodemque principio utraque procedentia, humanam exornant vitam.* And in his 131 Novel, † to the same purpose, he takes the Ecclesiastical Canons of the Four General Councils into the Body of his Laws, whose Determinations he honours, as the Holy Scriptures, and says he receives their Canons as Laws. But it is observable that they stile their doing it * *prophetau*, the Protection only of the Ecclesiastical Canons; whereas they call their Authority * *Leges*, a Legislative Power in the Constitution of their Civil Laws. And it is farther observed, † that in the *Theodosian Code*, which is a Collection of Sixteen Emperors Constitutions, there is not one Law to be found, relating to Religion, but what was antecedently determined by some Council. Which is no derogation from Emperors, and Kings calling Councils, and Synods, nor an abatement of their just Authority over them; but it is mentioned to shew the distinct Power of the Church from Civil Governments, in things purely Spiritual, and relating to its own Oeconomy.

And these Considerations are, I hope, sufficient to take off the Defamation of our being so injurious to Civil Powers, as to interfere with them, and to involve the Subjects in inextricable difficulties.

When something like this was objected against our Ecclesiastical Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, in the Reign of King *Charles the Martyr*, he recommended the Consideration of it to the Learned Bishop *Sanderson*; which gave us that excellent Treatise of *Episcopacy not prejudicial to Regal Power*. And on the same Defamation, by a later unquiet Spirit, the late Arch-
deacon *Fulwood* has been very particular in shewing our Ecclesiastical proceedings to be no way interfering with the Civil Government, but

* Novel 6. c. 1. See the Case of the Church of England stated, by S. P. 1681. p. 96.
† Edit. Gothofr. Geneva 1624.

¶ *Sancimus igitur vicem legum obtinere sanctas Ecclesiasticas Regular, qua à Sanctis quatuor Conciliis exposita sunt, aut firmata. Quatuor enim Synodorum dogmata, sicut sanctas Scripturas accipimus, & Regular sicut Leges observamus.* Novel 131. c. 1.
* Pref. ad Nov. 137.

† Case of the Church of Eng. p. 93.

vindicated by it. And therefore it ought to be no prejudice against our Religion, or our Church in particular, which has, even to an inviolable constancy, asserted the Rights of Princes, and the Obedience of Subjects.

And I hope too, that I have not deviated from the Precedent of my Text, to *intreat, whilst we are defamed*; by assigning such Reasons, as may vindicate our selves, and in some measure, convince our Defamers. And we pray to God also for their coming to a more Christian temper.

And whilst we worthily lament those many monstrous Imputations, and blasphemous Reproaches of the Enemies of our holy Religion, let us not give them the least cause of insulting us, by our own disagreements.

And here, let my Conclusion be with an Address of Intreaty to our Dissenters, who profess a great Veneration for Divine Institutions, and a Zeal for the Purity of Christian Ordinances; who therefore equally abhor those Atheistical Principles, which are indifferently levelled against every Denomination of Christians, who have any publick Worship among them.

It is heartily to be wish'd they would seriously weigh the very great regard which ought to be had to the universal Practice of the Church of Christ in all Ages of it; and the mighty reverence that is due to the Service of Almighty God. How much it adds to the Beauty of Holiness it self, and how acceptable it makes us at the Throne of Grace, to have our publick Devotions offer'd up with the united Force of the whole Church; which, though in distant Congregations of the same Communion, may, as St. Paul directs his Corinthians, *all speak the same thing, being perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment*; and so may, *with one heart, and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. May we not truly esteem this devout ardency of united Zeal, to be a good degree of that holy violence by which Heaven it self is taken? And how admirably has our Church provided for it, in her most excellent Liturgy; by which we may most effectually pray with the Spirit, because with the understanding also?

We intreat them to consider the exceeding value of that Unity of Communion, for which our Blessed Saviour so earnestly prayed to his Father; and has left that pathetick Address recorded, that it might forever affect and influence his Church; that no Member of it might divide from his Body.

How many Instances of Unity does St. Paul give his *Ephesians*, to shew how inconsistent Division is with the Religion they profess; and more deeply to imprint the Admonition he there gives, of *endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of Peace*? How does he make Division the Reverse to a spiritual State, when he assigns it as the Characteristick of a carnal Man? What is there so blamable in our Church, that it is worth the breaking this Peace and Unity in the Christian Worship for it?

Is it her practising, or enjoying any thing not expressly commanded by God, which drives them from it? It cannot be pretended that she imposes for *Doctrines the Commandments of Men*; or takes any thing into the Substance of her Religion, but what the Scriptures teach. Nay, our Dissenters plead their Unanimity with us in point of Doctrine, in Mitigation of their Crime in separating from us; not considering that the falling off from the Purity of Doctrine would implead them of Heresy; and that the Notion of Schism is the separating from an established National Church, in which we may communicate without Sin. And whilst our external Rites of Worship, have been always declared to be only for the more regular, and decent Performance of it, the substance of our Religion has no Innovation. What Church or Society of Men ever were, or can be without some Rites of publick Solemnities? And as nothing is required which God forbids, there is no ground for Offence, or scruple of Conscience; because where there is no Law, there is no transgression, and so there can be no Sin in it. A scrupulous, or doubting Conscience declares, by that Name, that it cannot charge us with unlawful Impositions; and a truly tender Conscience will be afraid to disobey, where it is not well assured of the Commands being unlawful. Men are not so scrupulous in their temporal Concerns; the Laws of civil Government, and the By-laws of Corporations and other Societies; the Orders, and Commands of Masters and Parents, are all readily obeyed, though the thing commanded be no where enjoyed by God, if it be not sinful in its own Nature, or forbid by any Law; because we account it our Duty to obey, in all lawful Instances. And how comes it to be otherwise in the Church, where God has so expressly commanded Unity, and Obedience?

But the Cause of sinful Impositions in our Church is given up, indeed, by their Vindication of Occasional Communion; for they know that it is not the Repetition, but the Nature of the Action, which carries the guilt in it; so that if once Communicating be Lawful and Innocent, a stated Communion is so too; because an innocent Action, a thousand times repeated cannot be sinful. And the occasional return to it, once in two, or three Years is also as deliberate an avowing the Lawfulness of it, as a constant stated Communion would be. Nor will they say they may sin occasionally sometimes; for an occasional deliberate Sin has all the

guilt of a deliberate Sin in it. And as they abhor the Imputation of Hypocrisy; so neither are they here charged with it; but hoping, undoubtedly they would have us believe, that when they thus occasionally communicate with us, they approach the holy Altar with a truly Religious and devout Intention, and receive that Spiritual Benefit by it, which all pious Christians hope for, and expect; we cannot but intreat them to consider how much greater Blessing and Comfort a constant communicating would bring to their Souls, and the more sincere they are, the more diligent they will be to inform themselves; and the more willing to reflect on the inconsistency of being of two differing Communion; and that the constant Judgment and Practice of the whole Church of Christ in all Ages, is a much surer Rule of being rightly informed, than their best Intentions, and greatest Sincerity, which is not of it self a competent Judge; nor can excuse their Schism in so doing; but will rather aggravate their self Condemnation.

When it is farther urged, that however innocent, and therefore lawful our Impositions are; yet small things, and the External of Religion may well be given up for the Peace of the Church; how strongly do they argue against themselves? Since all the Force of this kind of Reasoning does so naturally turn the other way, upon those who break the Peace and Unity of the Church, for confessedly small, and lawful things. This was the Aggravation of the *Corinthian* Schism, as *St. Clement* tells them in his Epistle to them, *that they were Contentions in things which did not affect their Salvation*. But Obedience and Unity, which are positive Commands of Almighty God, are no small things; and hence do the Obligations of Conscience arise; which no Doubts or Scruples in particular Instances, were ever reputed of weight enough to balance.

The Objection of our Churches too far Symbolizing with that of Rome is so deserted a Pretence by their greatest Advocates, that it can only impose upon the too credulous Fears of the Weakest Understandings. A Supposition inconsistent with the very Being of our Church! From what did she reform? Was it not from Popery? Were they not our Bishops, and other Members of our Church, that were the Noble Army of Martyrs in *Queen Mary's* Days? And (notwithstanding some contrary Insinuations) we still preserve that very Constitution, and that Purity of Religion, which it recovered in the glorious *Queen Elizabeth's* Reign. And what Umbrage have we given ever since to be suspected? When some designing Men, who wish'd not well to our *Sin*, thus imposed on the People within our Memory, God was pleas'd to confute them, by a very pregnant Instance of our immovable Steadiness, when he put

on another tryal in a late Reign; and when no one Member of our Church could want Encouragement to go over to Popery. But the World has been Witness of our Integrity; and our Dissenters themselves applauded, and rever'd the Primitive Constancy, and cheerful Sufferings of our good and pious Bishops; and the truly Christian Zeal and Courage of our learned Clergy in general, in their numerous Defences of our Religion, and Church against the strongest attempts of *Rome*.

But it must be acknowledged, that in that time of Tryal, the Leaders of our Dissenters were too much like another sort of Prophets, of whom God complained by his own Prophet *Ezekiel*, that they *did not go up into the gaps, nor make up the Hedge for the House of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord*. This plain, and full Demonstration therefore, of our Churches Ability, as well as Steadfastness, and Success in opposing the Church of *Rome*, even themselves being Judges, should rather invite and persuade their Return into this Interest, because most tryed, and approved Protection, under God, against Popery; than suffer themselves to be longer detained in a deplorable Separation, by these, or any other groundless Fears, and Scruples about Dangers, and Corruptions; which our greatest Adversaries could never prove against us.

Has not our Church complied with their Importunities, and held Conferences with their Leaders in almost every Reign, since the Reformation? And it is plain from them all, that no solid Reason was produced, for giving up the Regularity and Decency of her Worship; neither did they ever give any Assurance, that they had no more Demands to make; nor do they say to this day, on what Terms we may come to a happy Union.

In a word; is it not the whole Government of our Church, that is expected against? And will any thing less unite them to us? If they call this an external, it is such as we dare not give up, if we will be sure to continue a true Church. (I do not include the case of Necessity, which is at all times an allowed Excuse, but is not our Case; we are not yet, God be praised, ship-wreck'd upon an uninhabited Island.) And the Question may arise, (in an ordinary Case, where there is no necessity,) whether it be any more in our power to make a new Ministry, than to make a new Religion? whilst *St. Paul* says, that the Law, and the Priesthood must of necessity change together? And this was spoken to convince the Jews of the Abolition of the Mosaic Dispensation, from that very Topick, that the Priesthood was translated from *Levi* to another tribe. For, as the Apostle had before argued, God himself had so adap-

ted the Dignity of the Priesthood to that of the Religion for which it was established, that as the Aaronical was unalienably fix'd to that Tribe and Family; so in the Christian Oeconomy, no one takes the Honour of this Priesthood to himself, but he which is called of God by the Institution of Christ, as was *Aaron* by that given to *Moses*. It is a Delegation from God, says the Apostle; a Commission to administer for Men, in things pertaining to God, in the highest Ordinances of our Religion; to obtain the Pardon of Sins; to reconcile Men to God in the blood of Christ. And who shall take on him to change what Christ has established? and without a Regular Commission, to say to any Man, take thou Authority to remit Sins?

And if we inquire where this Authority is lodged; is there any thing in History more certain than the constant un-interrupted Succession of Bishops, to ordain, and govern in the Church of Christ? From the time of our Saviour's calling his Twelve Apostles, and giving them a distinct and superior Power to the Seventy, there is no instance given of any other Government in it. The Apostles had their Authority from our Blessed Saviour, which they exercised in settling and governing those Churches they planted; and when they left them to the Care of others, they appointed single Persons, with the like Authority of governing and ordaining, to succeed themselves; and this Succession having continued ever since, what room is there for any just exception against the Divine Right of the Episcopal Order and Jurisdiction, any more than against the Jewish Priesthood, in succeeding Ages to that of *Aaron*? since we derive it through the Apostles from Christ; as they did through *Aaron* from God?

For, as the Christian succeeded the Jewish Church in God's Oeconomy, so it was one remarkable care of our Blessed Saviour; to copy after the Jewish Pattern, in several of his Institutions. As this is observable in the Sacraments and some other appointments; so particularly in the establishment of the Christian * Ministry, suitably to their High Priestly Priests, and Levites; to which therefore some of the Primitive Christian Writers do allude in their accounting for the distinct Orders of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon, in the Church of Christ. And what better Title can any Order of Men pretend to, than this which is so exact to the Apostles Rule, that they are called of God, as was *Aaron*? We cannot say Christ left no stated Ministry in his Church, and if this be not it, where is it to be found? When *Tertullian* would refuse the pretended Prescription of Hereticks from the

C. 5. v. 4. v. 1.

2 Cor. 5. 18, 19. Col. 1. 20.

* See Bishop Hooper in his Discourse of Lent. Part 2. ch. 4. and 8.
De Præscrip. c. 32.

Apostles times; he challenges them to produce a Succession of Bishops from the Apostles; for this he says is, that by which the truly Apostolick Churches prove their derivation from them; as St. Polycarp was made Bishop of Smyrna by St. John; and St. Clement succeeded St. Peter at Rome. And who shall presume to change this for another, as long as this Religion itself shall continue, for which it was established?

As for the Identity, or promiscuous use of the Names of Bishop and Presbyter in the Scripture; it proves so little that they may as well make the Apostles themselves not superior to Presbyters, because they are sometimes called so; nay, equal with Deacons; because St. Paul more than once calls himself *diakonos*. St. Clement Romanus tells us, that the Apostles knew from Christ himself, that Contention would arise in the Church about the Name of Episcopacy; and for this very cause, being endued with the perfect foreknowledge of it, they appointed Bishops in their own time; and gave orders, that others, who were approved, should succeed in the Places of those which died; that so the Succession might be continued. And, which is very remarkable, he makes this Institution of equal Authority with that of the budding of Aaron's Rod, to convince the other Tribes that God had fix'd the Priesthood there. And thus, in the Apostles practice it is plain, that St. Martin was not equal with the Apostles, till he was taken into their number; and that a Power of Government was lodged with Timothy at Ephesus, and with Titus in Crete, to succeed the Apostle, when himself left the personal Care of them, which to that time he had continued; and the Seven Angels in the Asiatick Churches, where so many Bishops, thus early appointed to preside over them. And therefore what Argument is there from the promiscuous Use of Names, against the clearest Matter of Fact, in the continual Exercise of a distinct and superior Authority? Which promiscuous Use yet was not continued in the Church of Christ after the Apostolick Age; unless sometimes in compliance, when they spoke of those times; or by way of Condescension, as the greater includes the less; as when *Isidore* calls those Bishops who were the Predecessors of *Victor* in the See of Rome, by the name of Presbyters; and as St. *Augustin* frequently styles himself Compresbyter in his Epistles to some Presbyters, and *Condiacorum* when he writes to a Deacon; but no one will pretend an Equality of Orders in either of these Cases. And, as for the Objection from the Darknes or Shortness of any account in the times immediately succeeding the Apostles, it is so very inaccountable a way of arguing for any other Government from it, that it is somewhat of Kin to the evidence of the Souldiers against our Sa-

viour's Resurrection, that his Body was stollen whilst themselves were asleep; and therefore the proper Answer to that Argument, is what St. *Augustin* gave in the other Case. *Demianter, adhibent Testes.*

It is abundantly sufficient that all the Light we have, is clear in the Discovery of Episcopal Government, but History is very dark in the account of any other Jurisdiction. So that tho' there be an Egyptian Darkeness on the side of Presbytery, yet the Cause of Episcopacy has Light enough. For the Account of those times is not so dark; but we have the particular Succession of Bishops in several Churches from the very days of the Apostles, till the Empire became Christian; when no one pretends to deny its being universal. And it would be very easy for me to fill a larger Discourse with Testimonies from the purest Antiquity, that no other Government was known in the Church of Christ; that (a) without a Bishop, Priests, and Deacons, it cannot be called a Church; that he which is not in Communion with his Bishop (b) is not within the Altar; that he which is not within the Altar, cannot partake of the (c) Bread of God; And that the Formality of Schism consists in (d) forsaking the Bishop, who is the Center of Unity, and setting up another Altar. With so many, and so full Evidences from the whole Torrent of Antiquity, that it would be tedious to go on.

Only we must observe, that Diocesan Episcopacy was held to be so necessary to the Constitution of a Church, that even Hereticks dared not throw it off. And it was complained of, that the Donatists by erecting Bishopricks in small Towns and Villages, run into a Schismatical Diminution of the Honour of Bishops; which Practice was therefore forbid in a (e) Council; that an absolute Bishop should not be ordained in any small Town or Village, where a Presbyter might suffice. For tho' there were *Choripiscopi* then in the Church, to be assistant in larger Dioceses; as we have had Suffragans to Diocesan Bishops in England; yet Parochial Bishops were never known in the Catholick Church. And when Bishops were placed in any small Towns, their Jurisdiction was never so confined, but was extended to the Country round it.

It was the fulness and clearness of Antiquity for the Episcopal Cause which made *Blondel*, *Salmasius*, and *M^r. Daille* so earnest in their Attempts to run down the Reputation of St. *Ignatius's* Epistles, and the Apostolical Canons; whose genuine Authority if they once allowed, they knew it impossible to deny an Episcopal Power superior to Presbyters. And

view of a Bishop's Jurisdiction in the Church of England.

(a) *S. Ignat. Epist. ad Tralles* §. 3. (b) *Id. ad Eph.* §. 13. (c) *Id. ad Eph.* §. 13. (d) *S. Cyr. de unit. Eccl.* (e) *Synod. Sard. Can. 6.* *and* *Enchiridion* G. In the Latin Translation, *Simplex Episcopus*. To distinguish him from Suffragans.

this occasioned those learned Men of our own Church to vindicate both; and to set this Matter in so much a clearer Light, than they had been before in one View, that it was thought to put an end to that Dispute for ever. And when the Struglings of a dying Cause appeared in the Collections of a stiff Assertor of Parochial (miscalled Primitive) Episcopacy; it only produc'd the greater Confirmation of the Diocesan Jurisdiction, by that unanswerable Confutation of the late learned Dr. *Manrice*; who shewed that Author's Mistakes through all his Instances; and truly remark'd, that if we should allow them all, that there were so many Bishops in small Towns, and Villages; yet their Jurisdiction extended to the Country round about; and so was wholly besides the purpose, of his proving Parochial Episcopacy from them.

And it is farther observable, that in other Instances, which our Dissenters produce for the Presbyterian Claim, they are very unhappy, there being none of any pretended Antiquity, but what are for us.

Even *Aerius's* asserting a Parity of Bishops, and Presbyters Orders, cannot be so properly called his Judgment, as his Malice and Revenge for missing the Bishoprick of *Sebastia*, for which he very earnestly contended. And no wonder, if a Man of an ambitious Spirit, and who had given up himself heretical Opinions, should add this, of decrying what he was judged unworthy to obtain. Both *Epiphanius*, and St. *Augustin* record him for a Heretick condemned by the Church; which universal Censure must shew us, there was no other but Episcopal Government known in it.

Nor are the admired, and often objected Expressions of St. *Jerom*, in his Epistle to *Evagrius*, and his Commentaries on St. *Paul's* Epistle to *Titus*, less evidence for the Apostolical Authority of Bishops; for when he says, that a Bishop and a Presbyter were the same, till by the Instinct of the Devil, the *Corinthian* Schism was set on foot; and one said I am of *Paul*, another, I am of *Apollos*, and another, I am of *Cephas*, then, and upon that occasion, *toto orbe decretum est*; it was universally decreed, that one should preside with Episcopal Authority, in *Schismatis remedium*, and again, *ut Schismatis semina tollerentur*; in these Passages his Argument is the same with the modern Plea of Parity, from the promiscuous use of the Names in the time of the Apostles; but he is the only Evidence of Antiquity, which is alledged to make such a Conclusion from it. And by placing the Establishment of Episcopacy in

(a) *Pearsonii Vindicia Epist. Sancti Ignatii Beveregii Codex Canonum Vindicatus. If. Vossii Epist. adv. Blondellum.*

(b) Vindication of Diocesan Episcopacy, against Mr. *Clerkson's* Prim. Episcopacy. *Hares. 53.*

the Apostles Times, and upon such a remarkable occasion, he plainly condemns the Government by Presbyters in common, as inconvenient, and insufferable from its being the Seed-plot of Schisms. And therefore *in toto orbe decretum est*, it was not to be endured in any Part of the World. And, what is the deepest Wound to the Cause of Presbytery, by St. Jerom in this Place, he still asserts the Power of Ordination to be only in the Bishop; and so condemns the whole Ministry at once, which is received from none but Presbyters Hands. So that their great and admired Authority from St. Jerom, is such as no Church would be very fond of, with the Character given of it. So little is there found in ancient Writers to ground either Presbytery, or Independency on.

And let us farther intreat the Advocates for either, to consider, how much they would triumph over the Episcopal Claim to Superiority, if they could change evidences of Antiquity with us; if we could only produce an Instance or two of aspiring Men, who, *Diotrephes* like, had courted the Preeminence, and plac'd themselves above their Brethren, against the full Current of the Practice of the Church; and that the intolerable Mischiefs it produc'd, had occasion'd an universal Decree of the Church, or an Apostolical Sentence for its Condemnation. If under the Protection of the Civil Government, the Kirk of Scotland calls it the *Establishing Iniquity by a Law*, barely to tolerate Episcopacy among them; what a pompous Censure would they pass on it, if it had never been the Government of the Primitive Church? But this shews their Opinion of Toleration; and of two different Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions in the same Kingdom.

But by insisting so much on the sole, and Divine Right of Episcopacy, we are charged with an uncharitable Censure, and Condemnation of such Foreign Reformed Churches, as are governed by Presbyters, and have no superior Orders among them.

But that is a little uncharitable to us; as if it were impossible to pursue an Argument without particular Reflections. Those who see such a Consequence in it, may gratefully contemplate our own Happiness, and heartily commiserate their Want of it. For whilst they plead Necessity, (and absolute Necessity, I have allowed, is an Excuse for Irregularities;) it is sufficient that we do not make a nice Enquiry into the Measures of their Necessity; and that when they plead it as a Reason, it is not Argument, but Excuse. As *Bogermannus* is said to answer an English Bishop at the Synod of Dort, who entered his *Salvo Jure Episcopali*, when a Presbyter was permitted to preside in the Presence of a Bishop; *Domine non sumus adeo felices*. And so generally have foreign Churches allowed the Episcopal Superiority of Order and Jurisdiction, that there is reason to believe, if the Bishop of Geneva would have reformed,

med, there had been no such Government as Presbytery, to this day in the World; for hence it was that the Necessity arose. But Mr. Calvin was a Man of Parts and Management; and founded his *Genevian* Form on this necessity, and some other Churches were modelled by his Advice and Pattern. But it was (a) his deliver'd Opinion, as it has been, and is of the most eminent Men among them, that those who separate from Reformed Episcopal Government, are guilty of so eminent a Schism, that they know no Anathema too great for them. And to the deplorable Dishonour of our Country it has been observed, that no Protestants, but English and Scotch, did separate from the Communion of Reformed Bishops, where their Doctrine is owned to be Orthodox. And the great Respect, which our Church has at all times received from the Reformed abroad, with their particular Prayers for our Prosperity; and the present high esteem which many of them express, of our most excellent Liturgy, should for ever silence the Objection against us, that we should make nearer Approaches to foreign Churches, when they look on ours as the nearest Pattern of Primitive Purity in the Reformation.

But the Argument of our Dissenters from the Practice of those Churches, is so very weak, that they have not so much as that *Excuse* of Foreigners to plead; they being so far from the unhappy Necessity, that they are universally blamed for their Separation, and are daily intreated to return to the bosom of the Church in Episcopal Communion.

I can only conclude, as I began this Address to them, with the most compassionate Entreaty, that they would seriously consider the deplorable Crime of breaking the Unity of the Church of Christ, by a Schism which stands condemned in all Ages of it; and how much their hearty, sincere Return would contribute to the healing all other Breaches, and make us one of the happiest Nations, and Churches in the World. Nothing has at any time given a greater Handle to designing Men, than the credulous Tempers of discontented Minds; nor any Discontent so much, as Disagreement in Religion; where a mistaken Zeal is easily improved by Insinuations, to serve the worst of Turns; and even Mens good Intentions are led from one Mistake to another, till they are made Instruments of their own ruin.

How very advantageous a not well informed Zeal has been to the designs of the Church of *Rome* is too notorious, since by this opportunity they have been the Authors of some, and the Abettors of all Divisions from us. Why should they feed their Spleen and Gall, who thus make it

(a) *De Nec. Ref. Eccl.* See Bishop *Morton* *Epist.* asserted. c. i. §. i.

their constant unwearied business, to create and widen all Misunderstandings, that the Breach may be large enough to let themselves in? Whereas, if the City of our *Sion* were at Unity in it self, all the Force and Stratagems of *Rome* would signify no more than Squibs throne in the Air, to batter our Walls, or weaken our Foundations. How happily should we walk together, to, and in the House of God as Friends, united in the strictest bonds of undissembled Love, and with Joy and Comfort be effectual Partakers of the saving Mysteries of the same holy Altar.

And we farther intreat them, that however they are determined, they will allow us in the mean time, the same Zeal, and Stedfastness for our holy Religion, as our Text directs us from the Apostles Practice, whatever Defamations of uncharitable Censures, and hard Names, we lay under for it. That they will allow us as much Tenderneſs, and Concern for the Honour, and Preservation of our most excellent Church, which is so admirably reformed to the Primitive Pattern; as themselves have express'd on the supposed Obligation of even a doubting, and scrupulous Conscience; which can of it self determine nothing, nor give a true Christian Peace of Mind.

We heartily intreat them in the Spirit of Meekness, and Christian Compassion, without the least Mixture of Envy at their Indulgence, which gives them the Opportunity of the freest Debates and Consideration; that they would weigh the Merits of the Cause, and see upon the whole, the Excellence of that Church from which they separate; and how free She is from being the Occasion of it. For our Churches Moderation is sufficiently vindicated, both in her first Reformation from the Corruptions of *Rome*, and the Continuance of her Purity in Doctrine and Worship. And what room is there then for calling for farther Degrees of it, or accusing her sincere Members of its Want? A cold Indifference, and Unconcernedness for the Honour, and Authority of our Church, when invaded or reproach'd, is not the Moderation recommended by the Apostle, (who requires a constant and * affectionate Zeal, when it is thus placed on its right Object;) but it is the Carelessness of the Heathen *Gallio*, or the condemned Lukewarmness of *Laodicea*. And Zeal it self, indeed, may be temperate; for he which flies above the Laws and Constitution of the Church (which ought to be his unvariable Rule,) is too hot, and too high; as he which sinks below it, in tamely giving it up, or neglecting his Duty, in mutilating her sacred Offices, under all his Obligations of Oaths, and Subscriptions, is too low. The Moderate Man shews his humble temper, by not growing wiser than his

* Gal. 4. 18.

Superiors ; and his sincere Obedience, by his exact Conformity to the happy Constitution, under which he lives.

And we doubt not at last, of the Ingenuity of our Dissenters, that they will even applaud, and be in Love with our Sincerity ; and be fully convinc'd that we act honestly upon Principle, when we thus lay our Reasons and Arguments before them.

And lastly, this will best discharge our Consciences, and incline God to preserve his Religion from the Invasions of prophane, and Atheistical Men. And our well directed Zeal, and sober Stedfastness, and suitably pious, and exemplary Lives, will let the World see that our Religion is venerable, and is the Power of God in us. And we hope will convince, and win in time, our unhappiest Gainfayers ; and bring home all our well inclined, however strayed Sheep, that we may be one Fold, under the one great Shepherd, and Bishop of our Souls ; the Founder and Preserver of our Holy Religion even our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, three equally glorious Persons, and one Incomprehensible God, be all Honour, and Glory, for evermore. Amen.*

F I N I S.

21 W 1 E

